

RECOMMENDATIONS, QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS REGARDING ANNUAL UPDATES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2012/13 FOR EXPANSION/PRUDENT RESERVE

The Commission for Children and Families has been an active participant in the County stakeholder process for both the Community Service and Support (CSS) planning and the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) planning for this voter approved effort to increase mental health services in the community. We have provided representation on the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Stakeholder's Systems Leadership Team (SLT) since its inception. In addition, the Commission established a Mental Health Workgroup about a year and a half ago to review the MHSA spending and programs. It is with this background and the needs of children and families that the Commission reviewed the recent plans for prudent reserve and expansion in the MHSA Annual Update for Fiscal Year 2012/13. In reviewing the DMH proposal, the Commission has the following questions, concerns, and recommendations regarding the plan:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALTERNATE PLAN

1. The attached proposal includes suggested funding from expansion dollars for:
 - a. Psychiatric Social Workers (PSWs) in the delinquency courts; and
 - b. Funding PSWs as part of MDTs in the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) regional offices to identify youth prior to their "crossing over" to delinquency.

The report from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation (fact sheet attached) on crossover youth points out the impact these youth have on **all** County funds and services even into their adulthood. Investing in services that would prevent youth from "crossing over" to delinquency would not only benefit the individual youth but also generate a net cost savings to benefit the County.

The research conducted by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation in partnership with the Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office (CEO) makes a compelling case that some of the children and TAY expansion dollars be spent on this "crossover" population.

The cost for both programs is approximately \$2.2 million. These funds could be made available by shifting funds or eliminating programs from the current MHSA expansion proposal.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

1. The Commission would like to suggest that a more inclusive MHSA planning process be developed. Since some of the services are directly for use in the foster care delinquency system, it would seem appropriate that input be solicited from the Children's Deputies, Justice Deputies, DCFS, Probation, or the Commission for Children and Families, prior to the development of the Plan. While the Commission recognizes the MHSA dollars are intended for all children in Los Angeles County, not just foster and probation children and TAY, the plan would benefit from the knowledge brought forward by the Deputies, Department Representatives, and the Commission who are knowledgeable on a variety of children's issues.

While it appears that most of the services earmarked for expansion come from the original CSS Stakeholder Plans, the largest category of expansion dollars is for Field Capable Clinical Services (FCCS) which was not part of the original TAY or children's plans. This seems to confirm that services can be added that were not part of the original stakeholder process.

2. There are \$6 million allocated to Cross Cutting in the proposed expansion dollars. What will be the percentage and dollar amount deducted from the Prudent Reserve for each age group for the Cross Cutting?
3.
 - a. The attached report from the Department of Mental Health (DMH) dated February 2, 2012 shows estimated unspent dollars for children under the CSS Plan of \$11,009,174 and \$6,249,892 for TAY. Since the Commission understands that DMH considers that unspent dollars are "one-time money" and cannot be spent on expansion services, how will these funds be spent?
 - b. The same February 2, 2012 report shows prudent reserves of \$19,898,182 for TAY funding. Does that mean after the expansion dollars of approximately \$2.1 million for each are taken out the balances will be approximately \$17.8 million and \$17.7 million, respectively?
4. The original CSS Plan included funding for Systems Navigators and Housing Representatives as part of the Transition Resource Centers (TRC). For a number of reasons the TRCs, while initially considered a success, have had a decline in the number of youth "dropping" into these centers. The Chief Executive Office Self Sufficiency Committee is currently assessing the TRCs as part of a larger Youth Development Services (YDS) Redesign. The TRCs may be eliminated or a new model developed. Is this the best time to expand Drop-in Centers? Should that decision be made after the Committee Assessment is complete?

5. While we are in agreement that we do not want TAY sleeping in the street, there were two SLT members who had objections to the emergency shelter bed expansion. It would be helpful to know why? The addition of 3,529 emergency shelter beds suggests a “big picture” problem. Perhaps we need to have an analysis of the problem and determine whether other actions need to be taken instead of just expanding emergency beds.
6. There is a substantial amount of funding being spent on Mental Health Services in the Probation camps. Has there been an analysis of the outcome study as to whether the current services are working? What is the total number of services needed? What are the types of services needed? Has there been an assessment of whether Full Service Partnership (FSP) is the best approach for services in camps?
7. The expansion plan funds that will support a Department of Children and Family Services/Probation – Systems Navigators. The Commission needs clarification on this item. The Commission is concerned regarding the effectiveness of the Systems Navigators in the camps and whether additional navigators are needed. It seems some analysis needs to be done on the effectiveness of the current eight System Navigators. Concerns have been raised from staff in the camps that the Systems Navigators in the camps merely refer the youth to the Systems Navigators in the community. In addition DMH indicated that the justification for adding a TAY Navigator is that a TAY Navigator was moved to the Relative Care Resource Center. However the center only has a Navigator one-half day, one day per week. That Navigator provides services to adult relatives, older adult relatives, children and TAY. Why would the TAY budget absorb the cost of a fulltime Navigator for a position that is only available half-day a week to assist all age groups? Should the funding for this position come from the Cross Cutting category?

The Commission acknowledges the efforts of DMH in dealing with the complex process of implementing and tracking of the MHSA funds and services.

To assist in the process, the Commission continually strives to bring together the diverse perspectives from all County departments to yield an integrated and comprehensive plan to improve the lives of at-risk children, youth and families in Los Angeles County.